

FROM THE BOOKSHELF NO. 134  
ALICE RICHMAN SCHACHNER

MARCH 30, 1976

"THE NEW YORK TIMES MANUAL OF STYLE AND USAGE"

ANNCR: THE VOICE OF AMERICA BRINGS YOU ANOTHER IN THE WEEKLY SERIES, FROM THE BOOKSHELF ... IN WHICH WE REPORT ON BOOKS AMERICANS ARE READING. TODAY, ALICE RICHMAN SCHACHNER'S REPORT ON A BOOK THAT JOURNALISTS, AND NON-JOURNALISTS, ARE ... CONSULTING. IT'S "THE NEW YORK TIMES MANUAL OF STYLE AND USAGE," PUBLISHED BY QUADRANGLE. HERE IS BOOK EDITOR \_\_\_\_\_:

VOICE: THE CHARACTER OF A NEWSPAPER IS SOMETHING LIKE THAT OF A SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA. IN BOTH CASES, WIDELY DIFFERENT BUT RELATED ELEMENTS HAVE BEEN WELDED INTO A SINGLE, HARMONIOUS UNIT. AN ORCHESTRA'S UNITY IS CALLED ITS "VOICE." A NEWSPAPER'S UNITY MAY BE CALLED ITS "FACE." THE DISTINCTIVE FACE WHICH THE NEW YORK TIMES PRESENTS TO ITS READERS IS MADE UP, IN PART, BY THE STYLE OF ITS WRITING. BUT STYLE IS SOMETIMES INFLUENCED BY LANGUAGE CHANGES. NEW PHRASES ARE COINED. TRADITIONAL FORMS OF GRAMMAR ARE ALTERED AND THE MEANING OF WORDS ARE REINTERPRETED AND SOMETIMES, DISTORTED. THE TIMES MANUAL OF STYLE AND USAGE TAKES NOTES OF RECENT CHANGES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, ACCEPTING SOME AND REFUSING OTHERS.

OUR INTENT, ITS EDITOR SAYS, "IS TO GIVE PREFERENCE TO THAT WHICH SAFEGUARDS THE LANGUAGE FROM DEBASEMENT... AVOIDING THE TIMEWORN AND THE TRITE; TO SHUN SLANG AND COLLOQUIALISMS IN INAPPROPRIATE CONTEXTS, BUT TO USE THEM WITHOUT SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS WHEN THE CONTEXT IS APPROPRIATE."

VOICE:  
(CONT'D)

THE TIMES' POLICY WITH RESPECT TO OBSCENITY AND OFFENSIVE VULGARITY REMAINS MUCH THE SAME: THEY SHOULD NOT APPEAR IN THE PAPER. BUT, PROFANITY IN ITS Milder FORMS CAN OCCASIONALLY BE JUSTIFIED. ALSO, THE IMPACT OF FEMINISM IN THE UNITED STATES HAS NOT PRODUCED NOT ONLY NEW WORDS BUT ALSO A DIFFERENT WAY OF WRITING ABOUT WOMEN. THE MANUAL DOES NOT SANCTION THE USE OF A WORD LIKE "SPOKESWOMAN" AND THE HONORIFIC "HIS." IS OMITTED AS NOT BEING UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED. BUT WRITERS AND EDITORS ARE CAUTIONED TO AVOID "UNDESIRABLE SUBTLETIES OF MEANING" THAT MIGHT IMPLY THAT THE NEW YORK TIMES SPEAKS WITH A PURELY MASCULINE VOICE. GOLDA MEIR, IT NOTES, HAS OFTEN BEEN CALLED A GRANDMOTHER IN CONTEXTS IN WHICH CHARLES DE GAULLE WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN CALLED A GRANDFATHER.

IN MATTERS OF JOURNALISTIC POLICY, THE NEW MANUAL INCLUDES FOR THE FIRST TIME STATEMENTS REGARDING SUCH MATTERS AS THE INTEGRITY OF TIMES DATELINES, THE IDENTIFICATION OF SOURCES IN ITS ARTICLES AND ON FAIRNESS IN THE PRESENTATION OF THE NEWS.

THE DATELINES, THE DESIGNATION AT THE OPENING OF A DISPATCH THAT GIVES ITS PLACE AND DATE OF ORIGIN, MUST MEAN THAT THE REPORTER WAS ACTUALLY THERE WHEN THE STORY WAS WRITTEN OR TELEPHONED TO NEW YORK. IN DISCUSSING THE MATTER OF SOURCE, THE MANUAL ASSERTS THAT THE BEST NEWS SOURCE IS THE ONE THAT IS

VOICE:  
(CONT'D) IDENTIFIED BY NAME. IF THE SOURCES ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES, THE DECISION TO PERMIT ANONYMITY MUST BE JUSTIFIED BY THE CONVICTION THAT THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO CONVEY THE INFORMATION. BOTH THE EDITOR AND THE REPORTER MUST BE SATISFIED THAT THE INFORMATION IS BOTH FACTUAL AND IMPORTANT. THE ENTRY TITLED "FAIRNESS AND IMPARTIALITY" SAYS IN PART: "OBVIOUSLY, ACCURACY IS THE CHIEF ELEMENT OF FAIRNESS AND IMPARTIALITY. BUT ACCURACY IS EASILY SUBVERTED. FOR INSTANCE, A NUMBER OF FACTS, EACH ACCURATE, CAN BE JUXTAPOSED AND PRESENTED IN AN ... UNFAIR MANNER. EVEN SIMPLE, SEEMINGLY INNOCENT WORDS CAN BE EMPLOYED WITH THE SAME RESULTING PARTIALITY." IT IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE, THE TIMES MANUAL CONCLUDES, THAT PEOPLE OR ORGANIZATIONS ACCUSED, CRITICIZED OR OTHERWISE CAST IN A BAD LIGHT HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK IN THEIR OWN DEFENSE. THE REPORTER MUST MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO SUPPLY THAT OPPORTUNITY.

ANNCR: YOU'VE BEEN LISTENING TO FROM THE BOOKSHELF, ANOTHER IN THE SERIES OF VOA REPORTS ON BOOKS AMERICANS ARE READING. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT \_\_\_\_\_ (AT THIS TIME) FOR ANOTHER SELECTION ... FROM THE BOOKSHELF. THIS IS \_\_\_\_\_.